

A very different combination of chance occurrence and methodical effort informs the work of Japanese artist Susumu Takashima at Chandler Fine Art.

Takashima may roll dice to determine the variety or order of colors that a piece will involve, or its overall dimensions. The cryptic figures in his titles reflect this step. But his drawing process is pure performance.

The large piece on mulberry paper titled “Ia, (Drawing for Brush, Ink and Paper) yang 2:1:3:” (2014) began with him taking a brush full of pigmented ink to the lower right corner of the page and tracing its perimeter freehand, the line thinning and fading as the brush ran dry. Then he painted a second line, following the contour of the first as closely as possible, then a third inside that, and so on until he covered the entire page.

Takashima’s only other ruling decision was that the ink strokes as they accumulated would assume the overall pattern of a square spiral, a format that recurs in his work in different orientations and densities. He also tends to leave a tiny aperture of unmarked paper near the center of a page.

Characteristically, in “Ia.. .yang 2:1:3” the tremors of Takashima’s hand as he traces line after line to produce a field of marks suggests a high aerial view of mountainous terrain. The full extent of his works’ abstraction becomes apparent — we might even say credible — only in a very close view.

The present show includes new works in metalpoint on small canvases prepared with pigmented gesso. Several of them have a shadowy elegance, their incising with gold or silver faint as the steam of breath in cold air, but they lack the impact of the brush-on-paper works.

Kenneth Baker is The San Francisco Chronicle’s art critic. E-mail:

kennethbaker@sfnchronicle.com Twitter: @kennethbakersf